

GOVERNMENT FORESTRY PLAN

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The Department of Agriculture announces, through a circular which is just coming from the press, that it is ready to begin operations looking to the purchase of land by the National Forest Reservation commission created under the Weeks law.

This law was passed with special reference to the creation of National forest in the Appalachian and White Mountains. Under it the Secretary of Agriculture is to examine, locate and recommend to the commission for purchase such lands as in his judgment may be necessary for regulating the flow of navigable streams. The circular which is now being printed is intended to give information to the public as to where and what kinds of land are wanted. Owners of land the purchase of which will be considered by the government are expected on the basis of this information to make known to the Forest service, which will conduct the work for the Department of Agriculture, their desire to sell. Copies of the circular may be obtained by applying to the Forest service.

The law is not restricted to particular regions, except that lands may be bought only in the states whose legislatures have consented to the acquisition of land by the United States for the purpose of preserving the navigability of streams. The states which have already taken the necessary actions are: Maine, New Hampshire, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina and Georgia.

The first lands to be examined for purchase will be in the Appalachian and White Mountains, which because of their altitude, steepness, and lack of protection are in a class by themselves. The area which is believed to need protection is much larger than the government can purchase. Much difference exists, however, between different parts of the region. Careful examinations which have been going on for the last ten years have proved that the conditions which affect stream flow to an extreme extent are found in relatively limited areas, which are scattered more or less widely. By careful selection it is believed that much can be done for the permanent improvement of the watersheds with the purchase of a relatively small part of the land.

A blank form for the offer of land accompanied the circular. Additional copies of this blank form may be had by writing the Forest service at Washington. The kinds of land which will be considered for purchase, if they lie within the designated areas, are set forth by the circular as follows:

Timbered lands may be bought either with the timber standing on them or with reservation by the owner of the right to cut the timber under certain rules to provide for perpetuation of the forest. These rules will form a part of the agreement for the purchase of the land. Since, however, the government cannot pay high prices, it is not regarded as probable that much land bearing a heavy stand of merchantable timber can be bought. Culler and cut-over lands may be bought as well as land covered with brush which is

useful for watershed protection, burned land, whether cleared or partially or wholly covered by young timber growth. Good agricultural land will not be considered. Owners may reserve the right to remove valuable mineral deposits which are known to exist. Proposals will be received for small as well as for large tracts, although small tracts can be examined only when the purchase of a considerable total of land in the same neighborhood is under consideration. With regard to the price which can be paid, Secretary Wilson indicates that the policy of the commission will be to make the money available go as far as possible.

“For the most part,” he says, “we shall have to buy cut-over lands or lands without much merchantable timber. I want to make it plain at the start that I shall recommend this class of land only when it is offered very cheap. Proffers of land at exorbitant prices will not be considered. I am frank to say that I hope to see a great deal of public spirit manifested by the land owners. I expect some lands to be offered at merely nominal prices in order to aid the government in getting well started upon this wise and necessary policy.

“The lands acquired by the Government will be held as National Forests. They will be protected from fire and the growth of timber will be improved as much as possible. The lands will not be game preserves, but will continue to be open to the public for hunting and fishing in accordance with the laws of the states within which they are situated. All their resources will be available for the public under reasonable conditions. Another point which I wish to emphasize is that we are not going to take from people their homes in order to put the lands into National Forests.”

The areas within which offers of land are desired are set forth in detail in the circular of Forest Service. The approximate location of these areas in New England is as follows, although Secretary Wilson warns those wishing to offer land that they should first secure the circular in order to see whether their holdings fall within the more detailed areas therein indicated:

In New Hampshire, land in the White Mountain region.

In Maine, lands in a portion of Batchelder's Grant in Oxford County.